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Contact Susan Nye at
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More information the web at
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When was the last time you received a love letter? Or for that matter, when was the last time you sent one? If you're lucky, you're smiling right now. Maybe you found a sweet little note in your brief case when you got to the office this morning. Or maybe you sent a quick "i luv u" text message late in the afternoon.

But really, when was the last time you sent or received a love letter? A real love letter. Not on a few words on sticky note. Not a few lines in an email. Not a text message. Not a cute card. Not an even cuter card, the kind that plays your song. But an honest-to-goodness-handwritten-on-paper-with-a-pen-and-mailed-through-the-US-postal-service-with-a-stamp love letter. The kind of letter that get saved for decades, bundled with mementos, tied with a faded pink ribbon and kept safe in the back of the drawer.

Elizabeth Barrett and Robert Browning were famous for their letters. So were Abigail and John Adams. Even Winston Churchill wrote love letters to his beloved Clemmie. And I've never thought of Winston as a romantic figure. Heroic, yes. Smart, yes. Romantic, no.

Even if you are absolutely, head-over-heels in love it's probably been a while since you wrote a love letter. There are lots of reasons. Some of them are even good reasons. Maybe you broke your arm wrestling a bear. Or you're a top super-secret spy and can't let a sample of your handwriting or finger prints get into the wrong hands. Like the post office, I've heard rumors that there are moles in the postal service. Or you just got your nails done. Or you hurt your wrist playing too much Nintendo.

Or more likely you are just too darn busy.

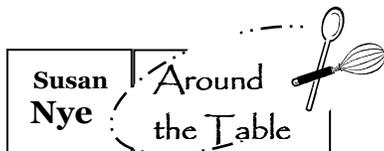
Sure the nails and Nintendo steal a little of our nonexistent free time but mostly we are busy with real work and real life. The Adams, the Brownings and the Churchills had it easy. They didn't have a slew of modern conveniences to distract them and steal their time. They were not chained to cell phones, computers and Blackberries. They were not constantly interrupted by conference calls and urgent text messages which are rarely urgent. No one worried about multi-tasking and life was a lot simpler. There were fewer chores to juggle and not quite so many errands to run. They didn't have carpools to drive, soccer games to coach or Girl Scout cookies to deliver.

In today's reality couples sometimes get so busy they forget to make time for real romance. So it is a good thing we have Valentine's Day. It reminds us to make some time for romance. At least once a year.

So with the economy in a shambles this might not be the Valentine's Day for diamonds or even a fancy restaurant or a big box of gourmet chocolates. However, it could be the perfect time to send your one true love a romantic letter. Handwritten, on real paper with a real pen. There's no spell check, so spelling doesn't count. The only thing that matters is that you write from the heart. And it's ok to forgo the post office. Personal delivery, especially with a single red rose or a perfect chocolate truffle, is always a nice touch. Have a wonderful Valentine's Day and,

Bon appétit! -

Susan



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just look like one!

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Around the Table Chef's
Apron

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Shrimp with Feta

Try this beautiful shrimp dish on Valentine's Day. It's quick and easy to prepare, leaving you with lots of time for romance. Serve the shrimp with orzo pasta or rice and enjoy!

Serves 2

1 small bulb fennel, diced
1/4 small onion, minced
Pinch of red pepper flakes or to taste
1-2 cloves garlic minced
1/4 cup dry white wine
8-12 grape tomatoes, halved
1/2 teaspoon dried oregano
1 tablespoon Ouzo or Pernod
3/4 pounds shrimp, peeled and de-veined
1-2 ounces feta cheese, coarsely crumbled
1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley
Grated zest of 1/2 lemon
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
Olive oil

1. Heat a little olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the fennel, onion and red pepper flakes, season with salt and pepper and sauté about 8 minutes. Add the garlic and sauté until vegetables are tender, about 2 minutes more.
2. Add the wine and bring to a boil. Stir to combine and cook until the liquid is reduced by half, 2 to 3 minutes.
3. Add the tomatoes, oregano and Ouzo to the skillet. Simmer over low heat, stirring occasionally, for 2-3 minutes.
4. Turn the heat up to medium-high, add the shrimp; toss to combine. Cook the shrimp for 2-3 minutes or until pink, do not over cook. Add the lemon zest and parsley and toss to combine. Sprinkle with feta and serve.